

# Ella, a woman of the Great American Dream

by Joseph Sanlei

More than likely not, most of you have not heard of Ella Grasso. 'Tis a pity, for hers was a truly noble life, a rarity among our race. She was born on the 10th of May in 1919; in Windsor Locks, Connecticut, the town honored with her residence until her death from cancer last week. She was the daughter of Italian immigrants to our "new world"; she was their hope for the realization of that which is called "The Great American Dream"- and her life was to see that dream fulfilled.

As a child, Ella Grasso attended St. Mary's Catholic school in her hometown and then travelled to the pri-

vate Chafee School for her secondary (for what is known in New England as "prepie" years. In 1940 she garnished her F.A., and in 1942, her M.A. both in Economics, from the prestigious women's college, MT. Holyoke, in Mass.

'Ella' as everyone was to know her, was almost immediately drawn into the people's service upon graduation from college. Her ambitious political nature soon gained her notice from the unquestioned tsar of Connecticut democratic politics, John Bailey, Chairman of the States Democratic Central Committee for more than a quarter century.

To "The Chairman" (as even John Kennedy would refer to Bailey), Ella was "perfection". An ardent partisan loyalist, Ella was to capture the respect and a rare, yet real love, from people on all sides of the political spectrum (including this Republican author who is proud to admit that I too cast a vote for her in the last election in 1979).

Under Connecticut's old constitution of 1818, two representatives from each township in the states were elected to the State General Assembly, and since the 1920's it had become customary, long before the present ERA debate, to elect one man and one woman from each town. Thus, it should not be surprising that Connecticut would be the first state of the American Union to elect a woman governor in her own right - that is, without succeeding her husband into office. Give Ella Grasso's long history of service to the State, by her 1974 election as Governor, it was not surprising that she would be that first woman governor. Ella had served in the State House of Representatives as Secretary of State for

Abraham Ribbacooff in his tenure as Governor in the early 1960's; she chaired the constitutional convention of 1965, which brought Connecticut its present constitution and for 12 years she was a delegate from Connecticut to the United States Congress.

Yet all of her accomplishments tell but a part of the story of Ella's life. The rest was told by the dignitaries from Washington, D.C., her beloved New England neighbours, those from other states and the Province of Quebec, and the tribute which poured into Hartford from around the world when news of her death was received. Beyond that tribute was the even more meaningful display of love by the tens-of-thousands of mourners from all walks of life who waited in freezing rain and abject cold, for the two days her body lay in state to say one last "thank you" and farewell to their Ella.

From Charlottetown, I wish to extend my own words of thanks to the woman, the statesperson, who so nobly led my State as Governor for 5 years. Rest in Peace, Ella - for you, as few others, have earned it.

## Bouquets and Brickbats

by Jim Revell

As I pull my pen out of the drawer and attempt to find a topic suitable for commentary, many themes cross my mind. This column not being sufficient in length to cover them all, I think I will follow a format that appears in the Montreal Gazette called "Bouquets and Brickbats".

To Herb Gray, Minister of Industry and Commerce for his announcement of Federal Assistance in the funding of the new Charlottetown Convention Centre. This will add jobs to the Tourism sectors as well as the ailing P.E.I. Construction industry.

To Charlottetown City Council for its lack of support given the proposed steam generating garbage disposal plant which would have been situated in the city's east end. While serving as energy purpose, it could have halted an even more serious environmental problem, that of the burying of garbage in our soil.

To Lloyd Axworthy, Minister in charge of the Council on the Status of Women, for his attempt to cancell a women's convention on the constitution.

To Premier Angus MacLean, Gilbert Clements, and President Meincke for their recent efforts in trying to persuade Nova Scotia to approve the location of the Vet College in Charlottetown.

To M.P. Tom MacMillan,

for his support of both sides in the recent Public Utilities Hearing looking into the Retail Gas Owners request to regulate service station hours. Mr. MacMillan in his never ending quest for support at home, couldn't decide on this one, I guess.

To Ed Broadbent and the N.D.P. for their unfailing support of the Federal Governments Constitutional Amendments. Just goes to show a third party can be of use on occasion.

To the Hon. Horace Carver, P.E.I. Minister of Justice, for his continued biting of the hand that feeds him. The Minister who hired his former law partners to contend the Federal Governments Constitutional Amendments on P.E.I.'s behalf, seems to have succeeded in wasting provincial revenues while irritating those who supply us with valuable federal dollars. Just ask the Minister of Finance, Lloyd MacPhail.

To Jackie, Grace, the Student Union Executive, C.P.'s, Bartenders, Winter Carnival Executive, and all those who contributed to the Winter Carnival-- you deserve the sincere gratitude of all of us who participated in "Flake-Out '81".

To those striking civic workers in Saint John, New Brunswick, who demanded a 30% wage increase for the upcoming year. With demands like that, it's little wonder the economy is sluggish.



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